

clever
parents



June 2006

KIDS CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF MADE BY HANDS ACTIVITY KITS

After watching the same dull gifts get passed back and forth at the almost weekly birthday parties their children attended, Dena Hirschberg and Ava Berry decided that there was a market for engaging, creativity inspiring toys. Taking a cue from companies like Lego that provide children with simple resources and open-ended options to apply those resources, Dena and Ava, "deconstructed the arts and crafts industry" and came up with a concept (and company) called Made by Hands.



DENA HIRSCHBERG AND AVA BERRY



Dena Hirschberg (pictured left), Co-President & Founder of MADE BY HANDS, is a Clever Parent to Marlee, 8. Ava Berry, Co-President of MADE BY HANDS, is a Clever Parent to Ella, 8, and Lana, 6.

'We promise to encourage little hands to create big ideas.'

The Made By Hands product line includes kits to make your own cards, frames, scrapbooks, games, puppets and pictures. The foundation of each kit is Pop-Outs!™ "Each of our art activity kits contains hundreds of Pop-Outs!™, an awesome array of geometric and whimsical pop-out cardboard shapes. They're perfectly die-cut for little hands so kids can create easily and independently without a grown-up's help. There's no cutting, no mess; just hours of innovation." Make Your Own Cards, for example, contains more than 500 Pop-Outs!™, plus note cards and envelopes, ideas to get started, templates kids can use as stencils and a glue stick. And it comes in its own special carrying case with a kid-friendly velcro closure.

With products sold in most states and 8 countries and awards for all their product offerings, Made by Hands has been a big success. In fact, they received their first order before their first product was finished. With a mock-up in hand, Dena walked into a toy store in search of advice and opinion. She left with an order for the company's first product, Make Your Own Cards, which to this day is their number one seller.



So how do they do it? "We watch kids. All of our stuff is created to do what kids do naturally." The idea for their latest offering, Make Your Own Masterpieces, came about from watching their kids play. "Our kids were taking Pop-Outs!™ and making pictures with them. We had the 'a-ha' moment and we changed the shapes to be more impressionistic and changed the color pallet to be bolder. And it's really pretty. So much of what kids create really looks fabulous!"

What's next for Made-by-Hands? "We are growing at such a rapid pace. Up until a couple of months ago Ava and I did everything. We brought on a couple of people to help with collections,

accounting, shipping and have been looking at new channels we previously didn't have the time to pursue because we were doing everything ourselves."

So what do Dena and Ava do when they're not busy running a business? "That is so funny," says Dena. "Ava and I go to the same yoga class. We each work out of our own homes. There are days when we don't see each other. Last summer we were riding our bikes on the beachfront and ran into each other – we were both on our bikes - and that's where we came up with the Go Figure line of educational card games."

There are 3 different versions of the Go Figure card games: Silly Bodies (take turns adding different shape cards until you've made a Silly Body), Crazzzy Critters (same thing except you make a crazzzy critter!) and Ways to Go (see how many different types of transportation (ways to go) you can make with shape cards - parachute, skateboard, plane, bike, truck, etc.)



"All of our products were inspired by our kids. We use a lot of common sense like watching and observing our kids and their friends. We give our kits away and we get feedback. We haven't struck a bad chord yet."

To learn more about Made By Hands products, visit www.madebyhands.com.